DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 368 FL 016 645

TITLE	English Teaching Profile: Norway.
INSTITUTION	British Council, London (England). English Language and Literature Div.
PUB DATE	Oct 86
NOTE	20p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Creative Writing; Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Information Sources; Instructional Materials; International Cooperation; *Language Role; *Language Teachers; Postsecondary Education; Research Projects; Second Language Instruction; Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Education; Technical Assistance
IDENTIFIERS	*Norway

ABSTRACT

A review of the status of English language instruction in Norway begins with an overview of the role of English in the society in general, and outlines the status of English use and instruction in the educational system at all levels (elementary, secondary, higher, adult, and teacher), the characteristics and training of English language instructors, the type and availability of instructional materials, educational administration and planning in relation to English teaching, English outside the educational system, British and other international support, commercial opportunities related to English instruction, creative writing in English, the current status of language research, and bibliographical and other sources of information. Despite the confusion caused by recent rapid and large-scale education reforms, some advances have occurred in English instruction, including greater access, increased emphasis on oral skills, a progression designed for the average student but capable of being individualized, and updated and more stimulating materials. Remaining problems include unstreamed classes, consequences of changes in the examination system, lack of intellectual stimulus, and the need for more development of teacher training. (MSE

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED281368

English Teaching Profile

Norway

October 1986

1 Role and status of English

Norway is a country of 4 million people with a highly-developed democratic and centralized state education system, an outline of which will be found in our Educational Profile for Norway. The only other peoples with whom communication is possible through Norwegian are the Swedes, Danes and Icelanders, and since the end of World War II English has been recognized as the first foreign language. As the country relies heavily on its invisible and visible exports, English is as important in shipping, insurance and banking as it is in industry and commerce in general; and international exchanges in technology and science, in the humanities and in diplomacy are largely conducted in English. The growth of the oil industry has further enhanced the importance of English. Internally, most Norwegians are exposed to a great deal of English through TV, radio and films; many (even popular) books are not available in translation; and non-Nordic tourists, even the French and Germans, accept English as the lingua franca, while Norwegians themselves expect to use it when they travel outside Scandinavia. English is thus important both to the country and to the individual, and people of all ages are motivated to learn it. Almost everyone understands some English, and very many Norwegians speak it fluently.

English is not formally recognized as a medium of instruction, but non-Scandinavians lecture and teach in it at university level, and in some disciplines (e.g. medicine, engineering, economics and the social sciences) many of the textbooks are British or American. English is not a second language, despite the ease with which some Norwegians converse in it with each other at international conferences or in the presence of non-Norwegians; for historical reasons Norwegians are very conscious of and devoted to their own language.

© The British Council, London 1986

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the permission of the British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN. United Kingdom.

FL016645

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Price

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

2 English within the education system

Compulsory education

Compulsory education in the basic school ('grunnskolen') lasts for nine years, from 7+ to 16, and is divided between the primary stage ('barnetrinnet') (7-13) and lower secondary stage ('ungdomstrinnet') (13-16). Schools have a five-day, thirty-period week, classes do not exceed thirty, there is no streaming, and policy is to absorb handicapped children as far as possible into ordinary classes.

English in the compulsory school

English is now usually started in the 4th class (i.e. at age ten), though some schools introduce songs and games etc. in English in the 3rd class. The number of periods is as shown below.

Class	4	5	6	7	8	9
Number of English lessons	2	2	3	3	3	3

The upper secondary school

Upper secondary education ('videregaende opplaering') is defined as post-compulsory schooling, catering principally for the 16-19 age group. Between 1976 and 1979 a sweeping re-organization took place to integrate grammar ('gymnasium'), vocational, commercial and technical schools into a comprehensive system, with the aim of providing opportunities for all to follow courses for two and three years (or four in some cases). Approximately eighty per cent of 16-year-olds continue at school.

The 'General Area of Study' ('allmennfag') most nearly resembles the former grammar school curriculum: it is followed by the majority of those wishing to continue their education beyond school. The other courses are in vocational subjects. The General Area of Study commences with a one-year foundation course after which students specialize along 'branches'. The most popular of these are the natural sciences, social sciences and languages branches. An alternative pattern consists of a two-year foundation course followed by either a one-year supplementary course or a transfer to the General Area of Study or to vocational courses.

English in the upper secondary school

General Area of Study - languages

1st class: 4 lessons per week
2nd class: 6 lessons per week
3rd class: 5 lessons per week

General Area of Study - social sciences

1st class: 4 lessons per week
2nd class: 3 lessons per week
3rd class: 5 lessons per week

General Area of Study - natural sciences

1st class: 4 lessons per week
2nd class: 3 lessons per week
3rd class: 3 lessons per week

The two-year foundation course

1st class: 4 lessons per week
2nd class: 3 lessons per week

The new two-year foundation course is followed by a 3rd-year supplementary course in which 16-17 periods a week are devoted to 'study courses and electives'. Pupils taking the modern languages course in this 3rd year have 6-8 lessons of English per week, though the figure may vary according to the particular combination of subjects chosen.

As an alternative to the two-year foundation course followed by a 3rd year supplementary course, pupils may take a three-year vocational study course in, for example, aesthetic subjects, trade and office work, handicraft and industry, home economics, agricultural subjects or practical social subjects. The part that English plays in these varies; it may appear as a compulsory subject, or as an elective or optional subject.

Examinations

The place of examinations in the Norwegian school system has been the subject of a heated debate lasting fifteen years. Until 1981, the dominant political tendency was towards reducing and perhaps ultimately eliminating official examinations in schools. The climate has, however, changed during the last four years, and it is now more widely accepted that examinations are necessary, both as a way of ensuring that standards are maintained and as a corrective to the unavoidably subjective marks awarded by teachers for classwork. It should be noted that examinations have no place in the primary school and that pupils are first awarded marks for their performance in different subjects when they start in lower secondary school at the age of about thirteen; the first official examination is at the age of sixteen, at the end of compulsory schooling.

The lower secondary school ('ungdomsskolen')

Pupils leaving the lower secondary school take a written and/or oral examination in May-June. The final written examinations (in Norwegian, mathematics and English) are the same all over the country. Normally pupils take a written examination in one of these subjects, and examinations are arranged in such a way that pupils in different parts of the country take the written examination in different subjects. On leaving the lower secondary school pupils are given a certificate showing marks based both upon examinations and upon continuous assessment throughout the school year together with marks for order and conduct.

The upper secondary school (General area of study)

The 3-year course (previously the gymnasium) terminates in examinations which can be equated roughly with the present A-level examination in England, and which serve as an entrance qualification to the universities and to other forms of higher education. Candidates take five 4- or 5-hour written papers and an oral test in their main subjects, and in these and their other subjects they are given 'oral' marks which may be based on an oral examination but generally represent a 'continuous assessment' mark awarded by the subject teacher. Pupils specializing in modern languages take their English examination at the end of their third year while those specializing in other subjects do so at the end of the second year.

English examinations in the lower secondary school

Various types of examination have been used in recent years in the final examinations in English. The written examination used at present consists of five sections, including answers to questions on a text, completion of a conversation, narratives based on a series of pictures and a composition. All five sections are related to a single narrative theme and answers to all are required to be given in English. Specimen papers may be consulted in the English Language Division of the British Council.

English examinations in the upper secondary school

The written examinations consist of reading comprehension and essay writing, whilst the oral involves listening, comprehension and discussion of a text.

Content and aims: language and literature

The Ministry of Education issues general and detailed guidance in the form of indicative syllabuses, curricula and teaching methods, though teachers are encouraged to innovate within the agreed parameters.

The nine-year compulsory school (primary and lower secondary)

The 1985 English syllabus for the compulsory school has this to say about the place of English and English teaching:

> 'In a small language community like Norway, knowledge of English provides a means of contact with other peoples. This contact is of benefit both to the individual and to the community, involving as it does the exchange of information and ideas and the promotion of international understanding. A command of English is increasingly important in work, education and leisure activities.
>
> Norway is active in the fields of international co-operation, trade and communication. Pupils need to learn English to participate.
>
> The aims of English teaching are:
>
> - to develop the pupils' skills in listening to speaking, reading and writing English so that they are able to understand the language and express themselves in it;
> - to provide the pupils with the best possible basis for further work with the language;
> - to assist the pupils in seeing English as a tool which offers them the possibility of gaining valuable knowledge and experience;
> - to help the pupils understand and accept the difficulties everyone meets in using a language which is not their native language.'

The upper secondary school

The transition from the compulsory school to the upper secondary school is a difficult one, in English as in other subjects. Textbooks tend to be markedly more advanced, more application is expected, and teaching methods are more academic. This is changing, and will change more as more flexible and less academic courses are worked out. Meanwhile, the aims of English teaching at this level are broadly defined thus:

to develop the pupils' ability to understand spoken and written English;

to develop their proficiency in speaking and writing English;

to give them a knowledge of cultural and social life in the English-speaking world, and to contribute to their own development.

The Education Authorities produce only broad outlines delineating the course objectives. It is required that pupils should combine intensive and extensive reading of literature (novels, plays, poetry), and texts illuminating contemporary economic, social and cultural conditions in the English-speaking world. Students specializing in languages should in addition read a play of Shakespeare or a work of similar standing by another recognized pre-twentieth century author. In the case of students who will have just two years of English the teacher may, in consultation with his pupils, restrict the reading to twentieth-century literature only (and in the case of students specializing in business and administration to business English).

English in the school system: some final comments

Within the state schools (and there are no others of real significance), syllabuses, the examination system and the availability of textbooks (core course materials) are all centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education and its specialist executive and advisory Councils; but within these limits teachers are encouraged to use their own imagination and initiative. There is no Inspectorate comparable with that in Britain, but there is a network of local teachers' centres and pedagogic and subject advisers.

The Ministry has two ELT qualified native-speaker advisers in English, recruited and subsidized by the British Council, who are attached to the National Council for the Basic School and the National Council for Upper Secondary Education. Their functions may be summarized as:

to visit schools, to teach, assist and advise teachers, and make a contribution to the teaching situation;

to organize and conduct short intensive in-service courses for teachers of English under the aegis of regional and local authorities;

to work within the Councils on the approval of textbooks, the production of taped and printed material, and the construction of tests and examination papers.

The colleges of education

The colleges of education ('Pedagogiske hogskoler') provide a basic three-year training, including education theory, teaching practice, pedagogical studies in the majority of subjects taught in the compulsory schools, and further study of selected subjects. Courses are normally expressed in terms of a credit system where a one-year course is worth 20 points, a half-year course 10 points and a three-month course 4 points.

English is therefore now available:

as a special full-time one-year course (currently at eight colleges);

as a half-year course, either taken as a block or spread over a year in conjunction with some other specialization (currently at eight colleges);

as a three-month course, normally spread over a longer period and taken in conjunction with other special subjects.

Originally the specialist courses in English, as in other subjects, were intended partly as in-service training for practising teachers wishing to extend their teaching range. Increasingly they now form part of initial training. In 1985-86, 155 students were taking a one-year course in English and 198 a half-year course.

Within limits, the colleges construct their own courses and set and moderate their own examinations; they are gradually ceasing to be over-influenced by university models. They have become less 'seminarist' in recent years, and more flexible in timetabling and teaching methods. They still use the lecture, and large classes, but allow far more time for group work and individual projects than formerly. There is quite a bit of variety, but a typical one-year or half-year course will contain the following elements:

the methodology of teaching English to 10-16 year olds;

use of textbooks, preparation of material, use of group methods;

grammar and structures;

oral practice (pronunciation, stress, intonation, acquisition of oral fluency);

background studies (British and US); literature (intensive studies of fairly recent British and US novels, plays, verse);

periods of teaching practice (organized in different ways).

The Newcastle course

Comparable to the one-year courses is the course which the Ministry of Education runs each year in Newcastle, in collaboration with the University there, intended for some 30 practising teachers. It is taught mainly by British staff, though there is a Norwegian 'tutor', who is normally appointed for one year at a time.

The Norwegian Study Centre in York

The Norwegian Study Centre in York is administered by a committee on which representatives of the universities, colleges of education and district colleges sit. The principal is normally a Norwegian seconded from his post in Norway for one year, but the teaching staff are English and include lecturers from the University of York. The Centre offers short courses, normally of two or three weeks duration, to Norwegians studying English at universities and colleges in Norway. The Ministry of Church and Education makes a contribution to the running costs of the Centre.

The Universities

Traditionally the colleges of education have trained teachers for the primary and lower secondary stages (now up to 16 years), while the universities have prepared teachers for the 'gymnasia' (now the upper-secondary schools). Although the majority of university arts graduates, and a large number of science graduates, have always entered the teaching profession, university faculties have hardly taken this into account in framing their courses and examination requirements, which have been conceived in traditional academic terms. This situation is now changing somewhat - partly because it is

government policy to work towards an integrated teaching profession by recognizing college of education qualifications as elements in a university degree.

The typical arts degree consists of three subjects (e.g. Norwegian, English and History; or German, English and Education), the subjects being studied and the examinations being taken consecutively and not concurrently, and the period of study lasting approximately four years to a first degree ('cand.mag.') level, with a further two years to Master ('cand.philol.') level. In order to be formally qualified to teach, graduates then attend a six-month course in education known as the 'pedagogisk seminar', which includes a short course in methods. (There is also a shorter summer course which provides the same formal qualification.)

English in the universities: courses and examinations

All four Norwegian universities (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromso) provide courses in English. The examinations are held at three levels:

'grunnfag' (subsidiary) - taken after a one-year course;

'mellomfag' (minor) - taken after a one-and-a-half-year course, or a half-year course after grunnfag;

'hovedfag' (major) - taken after two years of study beyond mellomfag.

The English departments

The two main components of courses at grunnfag and mellomfag level have traditionally been language and literature, the former being defined as language history and philology, and the latter mainly the history of literature. Although these academic traditions persist, the definitions have been expanded and updated. Language now includes some linguistics, phonetics (i.e. oral work), and grammar; and it is now possible to take 'engelsk mellomfag' without having read much literature written before 1800. At hovedfag level (which is partly by written and oral examination and partly thesis) a high degree of specialization, whether in language or in literature, is expected. Background studies is still the Cinderella of the disciplines, despite its obvious relevance to school teaching, chiefly because it is interpreted as lacking the intellectual ballast of language or literature.

English outside the faculties of English

In other subjects (e.g. medicine, engineering, pure science, technology, economics and sociology) many of the prescribed or recommended texts are British or American, and there may be expatriate staff lecturing in English. But the faculties of English are not expected to act as service departments by providing instruction for students of these subjects, neither in general English nor in English for Special Purposes. Nor do the other faculties or departments themselves recognize any responsibility for this. (One exception is the Norwegian Institute of Technology at Trondheim (Norges Tekniske Hogskole) where there is a lectureship in technical English, attached to the office of the Director of Studies. To the extent that the need for ESP instruction has not been recognized, one may say that it barely exists.

The district colleges ('Distriktshogskoler')

District colleges have been established since 1968/69 to provide post-school education at tertiary level: unlike the universities, they offer shorter courses often vocationally orientated or based upon the particular needs of

the region they serve. Nevertheless courses at grunnfag and mellomfag are offered in some subjects and three district colleges (Rogaland, Agder and Telemark) have particularly strong departments of English. Agder runs a course for translators.

Adult education

Adult education has a long history in Norway. The Studentersamfundets Friundervisning (SFU - the Adult Education Institute) was founded in Oslo over 120 years ago to encourage university students to give free teaching to orking-class adults; similar organizations have grown up in other university towns and elsewhere, and the SFUs are now organized in a national body, 'Folkeuniversitet', which offers vocational and liberal courses of all sorts, including study-groups working for university examinations, throughout the country. But adult education has also been recognized as a political weapon, and both the Labour movement, through 'Arbeidernes Opplysningsforbund' (AOF - the Workers' Educational Association) and, on a smaller scale, the Conservative Party through 'Aftenskolen' (evening school) offer a wide range of courses, though with something of an emphasis on public speaking, politics and economics, organization and administration, etc. The third strand of adult education is the part played by the correspondence colleges, which grew up for egalitarian reasons at a time when educational provision was much more unevenly distributed throughout the country than it is now, and which still attract a large following.

The 1976 Adult Education Act

This Act aims to democratize the adult education system, and to use adult education as a means of democratizing the country further, by providing courses and facilities which will stimulate everyone into active participation in life-long learning.

The Act operates through subsidized institutions, such as those referred to above, through the 'kultursjefer' (Directors of Culture) appointed by municipal and country authorities to expand and co-ordinate general cultural activities in their area, including sports and athletics, and through new bodies. The most interesting of these is 'Norsk Fjernundervisning' (Distance Education), which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Education in close co-operation with 'Norsk Rikskringkasting' (NRK - the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation), the correspondence colleges, local cultural committees and departments, and the adult education bodies. It functions very much along the lines of the Open University, also offering courses at lower levels and in more practical fields.

English in adult education

Though English is now taught well at schools, there is still a need for adult classes at all levels, met by Folkeuniversitet, the AOF, Aftenskolen, and the correspondence colleges. NRK, both by radio and by TV, offers courses based on the Take it Easy series. The SFU in Oslo probably has about 2000 students a year in its English classes, attending courses from beginner level up to CPE and the RSA teachers' examination; AOF in Oslo has about the same number, but with less advanced work.

3 Teachers of English

The two means of entry to the teaching profession (the colleges of education, providing professional courses for work in the basic school, and the univer-

sities, supplying graduates equipped with an additional qualification corresponding roughly to the PGCE) have been described above. The two streams are now mingling, in that a college of education qualification can be recognized as one element in a university degree, with the result that a growing number of teachers have had their education at both a college of education and at a university, and perhaps also at a district college. This, in its turn, reflects the need for staff who can combine general teaching of younger pupils with special-subject teaching at intermediate or higher levels. This may contribute to a unified profession, and perhaps ultimately help to bridge the gaps between the primary stage and the lower secondary stage, and the basic school and the upper secondary school. There are still some unqualified teachers in service (mainly young people acquiring experience which will help them to get places in colleges of education, and mainly teaching in small schools in the north), but the supply of teachers has increased considerably in the last decade, so that there is now an over-production. Teacher unemployment is much less severe here than in Britain at present, but the retirement age is high (67, 68 or even 70), and the retirement rate over the next few years is officially estimated to be low. Teaching is still well regarded as a profession (though teachers are held in less esteem than was the case even a decade ago and salary scales for teachers, advisers and educational administrators have not kept pace with developments in other professions).

Norway is now producing an adequate supply of qualified teachers of English. There are relatively few non-Norwegian teachers of English in the schools, though expatriate teaching staff are found in colleges of education, district colleges and the English departments of the universities. There are, however, no quotas or posts specially reserved for them and jobs must be gained in competition with Norwegian candidates.

In-service training

Educational legislation now makes provision for teachers in the basic school to spend one week of the school year on short courses arranged locally; those in English are concerned mainly with integration of work, production of materials, methods of stimulating pupils' activity, etc. Teachers in the upper secondary school have three days for courses and meetings every year.

'Statens laererkurs' (the Courses Department of the Ministry of Education), 'Forsoksradet for skoleverket' (the National Council for Innovation in Education), the main teachers' associations ('Norsk Lektorlag' and 'Norsk Laererlag') and the 'Pedagogiske Sentra' (Teachers' Centres) in the large towns also run courses both during the school year and in the vacations; those to do with English are invariably concerned with methods or materials rather than with improving language competence.

In addition, of course, large numbers of teachers find their way to Britain, chiefly during the summer, to attend British Council summer schools or courses organized by other bodies.

Associations of Teachers of English

Oddly enough, these hardly exist in any influential form. Local branches of the national teachers' associations have English sections, but they have no clear functions, and their meetings are poorly attended. A national association of teachers of modern languages was revived in 1976, with a publication Sprak og Sprakundervisning, which sets out to appeal to language teachers in schools.

4 Materials support

A lot of money has gone into building and equipping schools and other educational institutions in recent years. Design and building standards are high, and modern equipment has been well provided. Norway has its fair share of language laboratories, tape recorders, computers, film projectors, cassette players and overhead projectors, and they are probably used as little and as much as in most other countries. School libraries, however, are often poorly stocked, particularly in the basic school. There is no general shortage of textbooks, though there are deficiencies in particular fields. Most school courses in English for the basic school are composite (study-book, work-book, teacher's handbook, tapes), though teachers complain of a lack of suitable software. Problem areas, however, include:

material for weak pupils, at all levels;

material for practical work at all levels;

material for special vocational and career orientated courses.

Textbooks

Course-books in schools have to be approved by the Ministry of Education. They are therefore generally published in Norway (though they may be adapted versions of courses originally written for other countries, in particular for Sweden). Supplementary material comes from a variety of sources, and UK-produced simplified readers are quite widely used. At the post-school level, British and US books are regularly prescribed or recommended. Although there is some encouragement for experiment and innovation, such factors as the centralized system, national examinations at school level, ministry approval of school books, and the conservatism of many teachers produce a general pattern of uniformity, despite the choice available. Full lists of the books recommended for compulsory and upper secondary schools are available from the British Council.

Audio-visual media

NRK has regular TV and radio programmes in English for schools, chiefly for the 13-18 age groups. Films, records and cassettes are available from the US and Canadian Embassies, the British Council, 'Statens Filmsentral', etc. Our impression is that films, for example, are used mainly for their background and entertainment value, and are not properly exploited as part of a teaching process.

Other products

Teachers are beginning to produce their own material, on a small scale, partly to meet the requirements of group work (very necessary in unstreamed classes), partly to fill other gaps. Many short local courses are involved in this. But material from local products is rarely made more widely available, even when it is the result of subsidized research.

British participation in co-publishing is a possibility. The need for a wider range of textbooks will become apparent as the upper secondary school develops along new lines and with growing vocational emphasis, and some publishers would like to look elsewhere than to Sweden for partners and sources.

5. Educational administration in relation to the teaching of English

See charts on pages 19 and 21.

6. Development and planning of the teaching of English

The education system: its development

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Norwegian education differed in several ways from the European norm. The ideal of a unitary educational system underlied the laws of 1869 and 1896 governing post-primary education. By 'unitary' is meant not only that the same curricula are followed throughout the country but also that all pupils are taught the same subjects in mixed ability classes. This ideal has continued to be the dominant influence on educational planning during the present century. The 1869 law also broke with the classical tradition in education by approving the establishment of specialization in science subjects in gymnasia; science students followed thereafter a course which did not include the study of classical languages but which nevertheless fulfilled matriculation requirements. Education in Norway is still characterized by a very high degree of centralization, with little or no alternative to the state system, and by a pragmatic approach to course content resulting in frequent revision of courses and curricula in response to the needs of society in general and industry in particular.

The most important changes in the educational system since 1945 have come as a result of the introduction of a unitary 9-year primary and lower secondary school (1969-75) with its accompanying Curriculum Guidelines (1974, revised 1985) and a comprehensive upper secondary school (1974) which includes the former gymnasia, technical colleges, commercial colleges, domestic science colleges, etc. and which caters mainly for 16 to 19 year olds. These changes reinforce the long standing pattern of education in Norway, and indeed give expression to the egalitarian principles of earlier politicians and educationalists. The changes are fully in keeping with the pragmatism characteristic of earlier decisions; the parliamentary commission which prepared for the changes in the upper levels of schooling was asked to assess the need for education and training in the 16 to 19 age group (in the light of changes in the demands of industry and society), and many of the syllabuses are sufficiently flexible to allow the incorporation of locally relevant content.

Future developments in education probably include the lowering of restrictions on study across traditional subject barriers in the general area of study of the upper secondary school, through the removal of the demand that students choose cognate core subjects; this recommendation is contained in the well-received report of the Veierod Committee, which, in common with the Neumann Committee on the place of language teaching in Norwegian schools, also proposes measures that should lead to a strengthening of the position of foreign language teaching in Norway.

There is a fairly general feeling that Norway has gone through a period of large-scale structural changes in education, and that the administrators and staff now need a few years of consolidation. It is likely, therefore, that the present clear-cut, unitary system will continue to mark Norway out from other countries in Europe. It is an expression not only of Norway's relatively undifferentiated social structure, but also, inevitably, a result of many years of a social democratic government. Mixed-level teaching throughout

primary and lower secondary school, and even well into upper secondary education, is a price most people are willing to pay for the benefit of equal rights in education.

The education system: the teaching of English

The different resources of town and sparsely populated country meant that educational opportunities were, until long after World War II, very dissimilar. Laws passed in the 1930s introduced a foreign language into the first seven years of schooling, but only as an option, and many country schools were unable to include language teaching in the curriculum until the 1950s and 60s.

The current position of English as the first foreign language for all pupils in the compulsory school - for the last twenty years all pupils have studied English from 10 to 16 - can be explained both in terms of equal rights, which make it impossible to deprive a student of a privilege others enjoy, and in terms of meeting a clearly felt need to communicate with the outside world.

In recent years the teaching of English has benefited from educational links with England (see Section 3) and from the language work of the Council of Europe, in which Norway has participated. Neither the position of English as the language of pop culture nor the influence of the communicative approach can be ignored: English is often regarded as fun in the basic school, while other foreign languages are seen as more difficult and demanding, often duller. Both the status of English in the schools and the forward-looking attitude of the relevant authorities is in no small measure due to the work of past and present British Council-supported English advisers in the National Advisory Councils of the Ministry of Education. These Councils are responsible for the revision and updating of syllabuses and the in-service training of teachers; the other foreign languages have no comparable opportunity to influence developments in schools.

The position of English in Norway is not seriously threatened today. Proposed changes are likely to give foreign languages, including English, more teaching time in upper secondary schools; schools are also responding to the demand for English language skills more closely related to the needs of international commerce, the oil industry and information technology. A growing awareness of the importance of possessing a working knowledge of other foreign languages will not, in the forseeable future, challenge the unique status of English as the first foreign language for all Norwegians.

7 English outside the education system

The voluntary bodies and correspondence schools referred to above have previously received fairly generous state subsidies, and are now being even more closely integrated into the system. Just as there are almost no private schools in Norway, so there are very few commercial language-teaching institutions. 'Linguaphone Institutt A/S', 'Inlingua Sprogskole', 'Norsk Sprak-institutt' and 'Wrede-Holm Engelskkurser' are among the best-known, but none are really important in numerical terms. Nor are there many private teachers of English.

8 British support for the teaching of English

British Council

With English as well taught as it is in Norwegian schools and other institutions, there is certainly no need for the Council to undertake direct teaching, though our support and assistance, in the ways set out below, are helpful and appreciated.

We recruit and subsidize the two English consultants in the Ministry of Education (see Section 2) and occasionally support courses (e.g. in use of computers in ELT) held by them.

The office also recruits for Council summer schools, forwards papers for many ELT visitors (individuals and study-tours) whose programmes are arranged by the Council, and publicizes many summer schools and courses held by other bodies. From time to time we award bursaries or scholarships in ELT.

We provide assistance whenever possible to representatives of UK publishers with ELT lists.

Expatriate staff

There are no lecturing or teaching posts in Norwegian institutions specifically reserved for UK nationals. There were in 1977 two chairs of English, in Trondheim and Tromso, held by British subjects; eight or so UK lecturers at the universities in the English faculties, two in the regional colleges and some five or six in the colleges of education. Quite a few British people undertake part-time teaching in the adult education organizations. There are native speakers teaching in schools scattered throughout the country; most now regard themselves as settled and have acquired Norwegian spouses.

9 American support for the teaching of English

A resources and information centre has been established with American support at Rogaland College of Education.

10 Other agency support

English is the main language of the NORAD project and is offered to all NORAD workers as part of their briefing programme together with the language specific to the area in which they are destined to work. There is a special language school, part of Oslo University, which deals with this. The British Council and USIS (United States Information Service) both co-operate with this language unit and like all language teaching in Norway it is done extremely well and to a high standard.

11 Commercial opportunities

Publishing links between Britain and Norway appear strong in all fields including that of text books for English language learning. However, there

are two particular areas in which English as opposed to American materials are sought, often to no avail.

Background materials

There is a great need for up to date British 'background and culture' material. American materials are praised for their attractive slickness, for their topicality and surprisingly for their boldness in facing difficult issues. They are made available commercially and are also on loan from the US Schools Information and Materials Centre (see Section 10). It is often said that such materials are simply unobtainable for British background.

English language teaching training materials

This is the second area in which commercial possibilities appear to exist. There is high regard for modern British methodology in this field and although books, video tapes, computer programs and courses are all expensive there is a constant market for these things.

Information and advice

These seem to be readily available from a number of indigenous sources, particularly through the structure of the Norwegian education system. This system also includes two British advisers in the teaching of English, both in influential positions, partly paid by the British Council. The British Council itself offers a responsive service of advice on materials, calling on London for backup in this area.

Language courses and language schools

Courses and schools in Britain are well used. The Norwegians have their own English language centres in Britain, one in York and one in Newcastle (see Section 3). Most schoolchildren appear to have the opportunity to attend a language course in Britain during their time in secondary school.

Teacher training

This remains perhaps the area in which Norwegians look for most help. They are most keen to keep abreast of developments in other countries. An example of this is easily seen through the popularity of any courses we advertise on the use of new technology in the classroom.

12 Creative writing

British literature is read widely both in translation and in the original language and there is a constant interest in the buying of British book copyrights.

No literary prize is awarded for original work in English.

13 Current research

This includes:

a number of graduate projects for the major examination in English, particularly at the University of Trondheim, on, for example, phonological error analysis;

the work of Lars S Evensen, in Trondheim, based on research into learners' own perception of problem areas in the acquisition of English;

Stig Johanssen (Oslo) has worked on the Lancaster/Oslo/Bergen (LOB) corpus in connection with tagging;

the Information Centre for Language Teaching, which has been nominated the Norwegian Centre responsible for the European Research Register on Language and Language Teaching.

The paucity of productive research is one reason that in school-English, in school education generally, Norway is prepared to jump onto the research band-wagon of other countries, particularly Sweden.

14 Bibliography and other sources of information

British Council. Education Profile for Norway, 1979.

Council of Europe. The Education of the 16-19 age group - Norway.

Council of Europe. The Evaluation of School Reform, Pilot Projects, Strasbourg 1975 (pp. 27-32 and 72-79).

National Council for Innovation in Education. The Development of Educational Research in Norway, Oslo, 1969.

National Council for Innovation in Education. Structure and Work, Oslo.

National Council for Innovation in Education. Reform of Upper Secondary Education in Norway, Oslo, September 1974.

The National Council for Upper Secondary Education. The status and content of foreign languages. Report of a working party. 1984.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. Act of 13 June 1969 No. 24. Concerning the Basic School and Supplementary Act of 13 June 1975.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. Act of 21 June 1974. Concerning the Upper Secondary School.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. Laereplan for den videregaende skolen, 1976.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. Monsterplan for grunnskolen, 1975.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. Monsterplan for grunnskolen: Revised Edition, 1985.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. Ot. prp. nr. 58 (1983-84). The law governing private schools.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. Review on the Norwegian national Policies for Upper Secondary Education, 1973-77.

Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education. St. meld. nr. 15 (1984-85). On upper secondary education.

Oslo Skolestyre. Schools in Oslo, 1975.

Sekretariat for nordisk kulturelt samarbeid. Fou om Engelskundervisning/ Research and development work, 1976.

Universitetsforlaget. NOU 1983:2. The training of teachers for the upper secondary school.

The University of Oslo. A Guide Book for Foreign Students, Oslo 1971.

In English

The National Council for Upper Secondary Education:

The upper secondary school curriculum: (part 1) general principles.

Extracts from the upper secondary school curriculum: (part 2) common core subjects, general area of study, 1983.

Extracts from the upper secondary school curriculum: (part 3a). Syllabuses for branch subjects, the general area of study, 1983.

The upper secondary school in Norway with reference to qualifications for academic study, 1983.

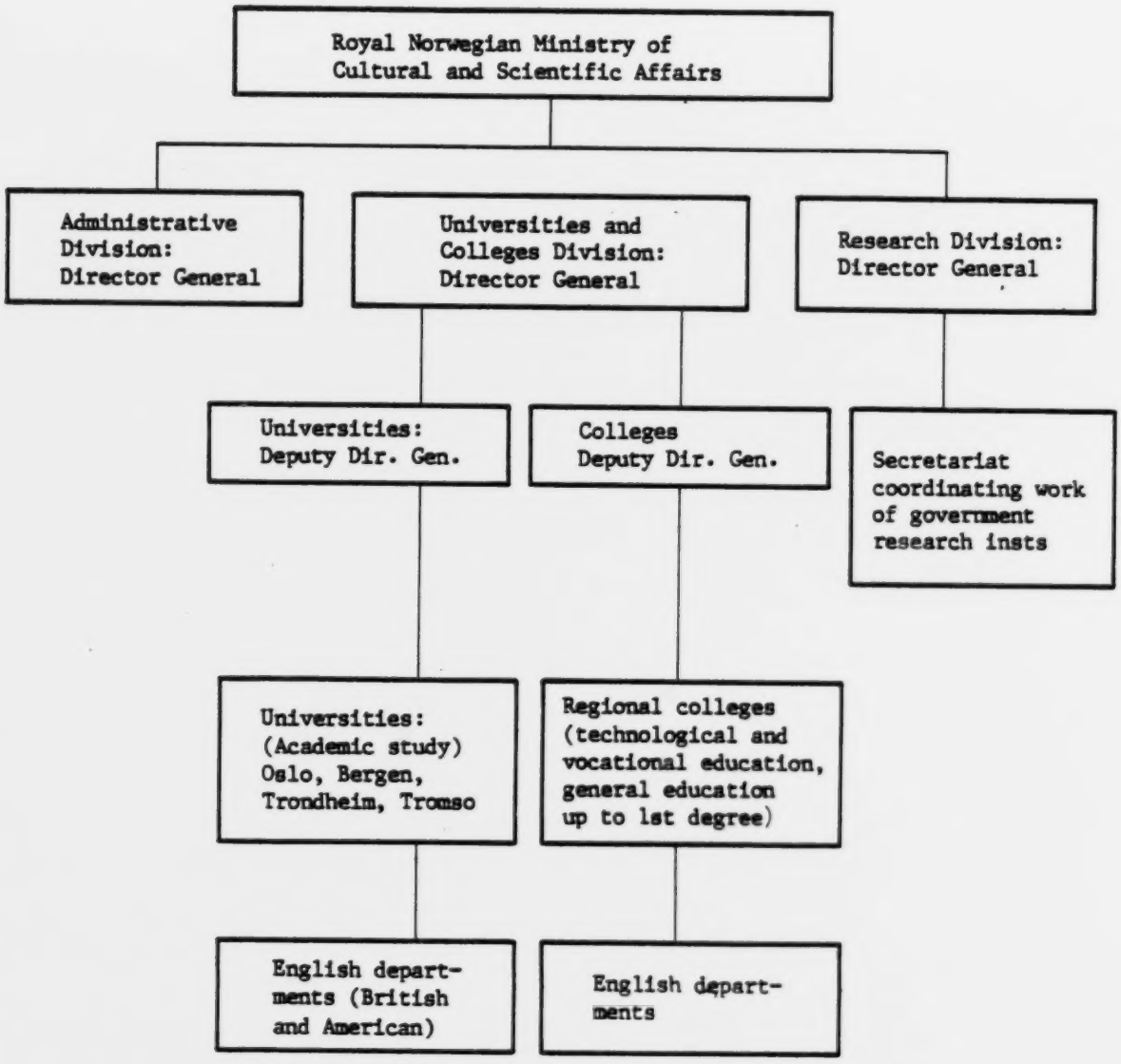
15 General statement

In the educational system as a whole, the 1970s saw the introduction of large scale reforms at all levels; many people would say these were too rapid and too sweeping, and that those actually working in the profession had difficulty in following the intentions of the legislators and the instructions of the Ministry. Democracy and egalitarianism were promoted by these changes, but at the cost of confusion and friction and - most people believe - a lowering of standards. Consolidation and widespread resistance to further changes and experiment mark the period from 1980 to 1985.

What has been said above also applies here. But some recent changes would command almost universal approval - English for all, more emphasis on spoken and oral skills, a progression designed for the average pupil but capable as far as possible of individual application, more up to date and stimulating material. On the other hand, completely unstreamed classes (including some handicapped pupils), the consequences of changes in the examination system and the lack of real intellectual stimulus have all created problems.

One basic problem is how to develop a form of teacher-training which accepts the consequences of the reforms in English and in other subjects. There is still too much theory, and too little emphasis on the classroom situation. Within the schools themselves, there is a lack of correlation between final

goals, teaching and evaluation - even in the respective weighting of oral and written skills. The problems of providing 'individualization' (enormous in themselves) have still to be solved in terms of group work in the classroom, and the requirements of the national examination system. One meets at all levels the feeling that, in comparison with the tight old days, things have been getting out of control. On the other hand, in schools and elsewhere, there are many staff, and not all of them young, who are applying themselves with diligence and confidence to the task of trying to make the new system work, not simply in English, but over the whole timetable.


Royal Norwegian Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs
Administrative Division: Director General
Universities and Colleges Division: Director General
Research Division: Director General
Universities: Deputy Dir. Gen.
Colleges Deputy Dir. Gen.
Secretariat coordinating work of government research insts
Universities: (Academic study) Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Tromso
Regional colleges (technological and vocational education, general education up to 1st degree)
English departments (British and American)
English departments